

3.02 THE BRONZE SNAKE

NUMBERS 20 & 21

The children of Israel were on their journey to the promised land of Canaan. Moses had been chosen by God to lead them from Egypt to the promised land. On the way, there were lots of complaints from the Israelites. God still took care of them. He provided food and protection. He kept them healthy. But sometimes, they seemed to complain too much.

As the Israelites were moving toward the land of Canaan, they needed to go through different areas and towns. At one time, they needed to go through the land of Edom. Moses sent messengers to let the king of Edom know they were coming. He wrote a letter, saying, "This is a message from your brother Israel. You know about all the trouble we've gone through. Our ancestors were in Egypt and lived there a long time. The Egyptians were cruel to us and our ancestors. But when we cried out to the Lord God, He heard our cry. He got us out of Egypt. And now, we are here at the border of your land. Will you give us permission to cross? We won't pass through your fields; we won't drink out of your wells of water; we will just keep on the path until we have crossed the border of your land."

The king of Edom replied, "Stay out of my land! If you step one foot on my land, I will kill you!"

The people of Israel said, "We will stay on the main road. If our animals drink any water, we will pay you for it. We are just weary travelers."

But the king said, "No! You may not pass through." Thus, the Israelites were forced to go around the land of Edom.

As the people of Israel were walking down the Red Sea Road, around the land of Edom, they became irritable and began complaining against the Lord and Moses again. "Why did you take us out of Egypt?" they cried to Moses. This was always their complaint. "We have no good food and no water, and we are so tired of eating manna!" The Lord allowed poisonous snakes among them because of the sin of their complaining. Many were bitten and died. The people cried out to Moses, saying, "We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take away the snakes." Because of this, Moses prayed for the people.

The Lord told Moses, "Make a snake out of bronze and put it on a pole. All the people who are bitten will live if they just look up at the bronze snake."

Moses did as the Lord said. He made a snake out of bronze and put it on a pole. Then, anyone who was bitten by a snake could look at the bronze snake and be healed.

In many counties of the world today, a symbol of the bronze snake on a pole is still used at hospitals and medical offices. This reminds us of Jesus and how he was crucified on the cross, being cursed in our place, to bring God's healing and eternal life to all who will look to Him as their Lord. He became our sin and curse as a snake on a pole to die for us so that we may have eternal life.

JOHN 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life!

3.02 THE BRONZE SNAKE - TEACHER'S GUIDE

NUMBERS 20 & 21 - JOHN 3:16

HIGHLIGHTS:

- 1) The children of Israel were being led to the land of Canaan by Moses. They had many complaints, but God always took care of them.
- 2) As the Israelites were going on their journey to the promised land, they needed to go through the land of Edom. Moses wrote a letter to the king asking if they could pass through his land.
- 3) The king of Edom said the Israelites could not pass through his land. They asked again, telling him they would stay on the main road and if their animals drank any water, they would pay for it. The king still said no, they could not go through the land of Edom.
- 4) As the Israelites began to travel around the land of Edom, they started to complain again. They asked Moses why he took them out of Egypt. They complained about their food. Because of this, the Lord allowed poisonous snakes in their camps due to their complaining. They told Moses they had sinned by speaking against the Lord and against him. They asked Moses to pray to the Lord and ask Him to take away the snakes. So, Moses prayed.
- 5) The Lord told Moses to make a snake out of bronze and put it on a pole. The people who were bitten could look up at the bronze snake and be healed. Moses did as the Lord said.

QUESTIONS:

- 1) What land did the Israelites want to pass through?
- 2) What did the king of Edom tell them?
- 3) As the Israelites went around the land of Edom, what did they do?
- 4) What did the Lord do when the Israelites complained?
- 5) When the Israelites told Moses they had sinned, what did Moses do?
- 6) When Moses prayed, what did the Lord tell Moses to do?
- 7) When the people who were bitten looked up at the bronze snake, what happened?
- 8) When we look to Jesus and his death on the cross, what happens for us?

ANSWERS:

- 1) The Israelites wanted to pass through the land of Edom.
- 2) The king of Edom told them they could not pass through his land.
- 3) As the Israelites went around the land of Edom, they began to complain again.
- 4) When the Lord heard the Israelites complaining, He allowed poisonous snakes in their camp.
- 5) When the Israelites told Moses they had sinned, Moses prayed for them.
- 6) When Moses prayed, the Lord told him to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole.
- 7) When the people who were bitten looked up at the bronze snake, they were healed.
- 8) When we look to Jesus and how he died for us on the cross for us, we receive eternal life.

JOHN 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life!